DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 146 135 SP 011 754

AUTHOR Pesavento, Wilma J.
TITLE Early Twentieth Century Arrow, Javelin, and Dart Games of the Western Native American.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented to American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 1977 National Convention Research Section Meeting (Seattle, Washington, March 27, 1977) ; Best copy available

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *American Indian Culture; *American Indians; Anthropology; Archery; *Athletics; Cultural Background; Cultural Traits; Folk Culture; *Games; *Mythology
IDENTIFIERS Curtis (Edward S); Darts; Javelin

ABSTRACT

The general purpose of this study was to determine whether the traditional native American ball games continued to be positive culture traits of the American Indian in the early twentieth century. The investigation was centered about (1) determining the current arrow, javelin, and dart games of western native Americans, (2) determining the geographical spread of the games among the culture areas and tribes, (3) determining characteristics of the various games, and (4) determining the presence of missile games in the current mythology of tribes. The field research of the photo-artist, Edward S. Curtis, revealed that early in the twentieth century traditional native American games utilizing arrows, javelins, and darts continued to be positive culture traits of a number of native North Americans living west of the Missouri River. At the same time, few references to these games were present in the oral tradition of the twentieth-century native American, but it would appear that the wheel game had been a positive culture trait of the Plains Indian from early times. (Author/JD)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED146135

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY ARROW, JAVELIN, AND DART GAMES OF THE WESTERN NATIVE AMERICAN

A Paper
Presented to
American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation
1977 National Convention
Research Section Meeting
Seattle, Washington
March 27, 1977

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

by
Wilma J. Pesavento
Department of Physical Education
University of Illinois at Chicago

SP011 754

Early Twentieth Century Arrow, Javelin, and Dart Games
of the Western Native American

The native North American had long been the subject of the palette and brush of a number of artists including Carl Bodmer, George Catlin, Alfred Jacob Miller, Seth Eastman, Paul Kane, and Frederick Remington. It remained for a Seattle artist, Edward S. Curtis, working with a camera, to come almost at the last moment to record the customs and character of the American Indian in all his ancient glory.

As Curtis' mentor, Theodore Roosevelt, noted,

> In Mr. Curtis we have both an artist and a learned observer,...rendering a real and great service to the world of scholarship everywhere.... our generation offers the last chance for doing what Mr. Curtis has done. The Indian as he has hitherto been is on the point of passing away.[1]

Beginning in 1898 Curtis recorded on film with explanatory text a photo-history of eighty tribes west of the Missouri River. The ambitious project was not completed until 1930. The final published work, The North American Indian, extended to twenty volumes of text, each of which was accompanied by a portfolio volume of plates selected from over forty thousand negatives.

Curtis' aim was to record the cardinal points, as he called them, of Indian life of all important tribes of the United States and Alaska that still retained to a considerable degree their primitive customs and traditions. Games and pastimes were one of the twenty-five cardinal points that Curtis researched.

Problem

The general purpose of this study was to determine whether the traditional native American arrow, javelin, and dart games continued to be positive culture traits of the western American Indian observed by Curtis in the early twentieth century. In addition, the investigation was centered about the following:

1) determining the geographical spread of the games among the culture areas and tribes,

2) determining the characteristics of the various games,

3) determining the presence of missile games in the current mythology of the tribes.

Procedure and Definitions

Data for the investigation were researched from the twenty volumes of Edward S. Curtis' The North American Indian published from 1907 to 1930.

Terms basic to the investigation were defined:

1) Javelin, arrow, or dart game. A contest utilizing missile-like objects which were shot or thrown at a target.

2) Myth. A traditional or legendary story concerning some superhuman being or some alleged person or event with or without a determinable basis of fact or natural explanation.

Results

Of the eighty western tribes observed by Curtis in the early twentieth century, forty-two possessed arrow, javelin, and/or dart games. These tribes are listed by culture area in Table I. Tribes within the California, Great Plains, Northwest Coast, and

TABLE I

NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES POSSESSING MISSILE GAMES

IN THE EARLY 20th CENTURY

FROM CURTIS' THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

Arctic	Great Plains	Plateau
Nunivak	Arikara	Flathead
	Assiniboin	Klamath
	Blackfoot	Nespilim
California	Cheyenne	Nez Perce
Achomawi	Comanchi	Spokan
Cahuilla	Crow	Wisham
Dieguenos	Gros Ventre	Yakima
Hupa	Hidatsa	
Karok	Mandan	
Kato	Oto	Subarctic
Shasta	Teton Sioux	Chipewyan
Wailaki		Cree
Wintu		
Wiyot	Northwest Coast	
Yakut	Chimakum	Southwest
Yuki	Coast Salish	Hopi
	Kwakiutl	
	Nootka	
Great Basin	Quilliute	
Mono	Tulawa	
	Tututni	

Plateau culture areas were most likely to have been playing such games. Thirty-seven tribes from these culture areas actively practiced traditional missile games. While some few tribes from the Great Basin and Sub-Arctic possessed these games, it was unlikely that missile games were within the game repertoire of tribes from the Southwest and Arctic.

Of the three types of missiles used, arrow and javelin games were most common; twenty-seven tribes possessed arrow games and twenty-five tribes practiced javelin games. Table II illustrates the various missile games played in culture areas. Archery games were most often played by Plains, California, and Northwest Coast Indians while javelin games were most often played by Plains, Plateau, and Northwest Coast tribes. Few tribes played dart games, only seven. Dart games were most likely to have been played in the Plateau culture area.

Of the archery games, games with targets fixed at a distance from the shooter or thrown into the air by the shooter were most common. Rolling wheel and arrow games and distance shooting games were less common. Of the javelin hurling games, rolling wheel target games were most common; games of javelin hurling at fixed targets and snowsnakes were less common. Rolling wheel dart games and fixed target dart games were equally common; games in which darts were thrown for distance did not exist.

The missile games in Curtis' accounts were of three general types when the targets utilized in the games were analyzed. Table

TABLE II

NUMBERS OF NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES

POSSESSING MISSILE GAMES IN THE EARLY 20th CENTURY

FROM CURTIS' THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

Games	Arctic	Calif.	Great Basin	Great Plains	Northwest	Plateau	Southwest	Sub Arctic	Total
Tribes Observed	5	16	3	15	9	13	17	2	80
Missile Games #	1	12	1	11	7	7	1	2	42
Arrow Games #	0	16	0	5	6	3	1	2	27
Wheel	0	0	0	1	4	1	0	1	7
Target	0	6	0	3	3	0	1	1	14
Distance	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
General	0	3	0	1	2	2	0	0	8
Javelin Games #	1	3	1	10	4	4	0	2	25
Wheel	0	1	1	8	1	3	0	0	14
Target	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	6
Distance	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	4
General	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
Dart Games #	0	0	0	2	0	4	1	0	7
Wheel	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Target	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Distance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
General	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3

III indicates the most common types were rolling wheel games and fixed target games. Twenty tribes possessed wheel games and twenty tribes played fixed target games. The least common target game was where the missile was shot or thrown for distance; but nine tribes possessed games of that nature.

There was a high degree of mutual exclusivity within the three categories of target games. If a rolling wheel game, or a fixed target game, or a distance target game was played in the tribal culture with any one of the three missiles, it was extremely unlikely that one of the other two missiles was used for another variation of a wheel game.

During the early twentieth century rolling wheel, fixed target, or distance missile games were played with great similarity within the several culture areas although variations did exist. In the wheel game, two opposing competitiors generally ran beside the rolling wheel attempting to cause the wheel to come to rest upon the cast or shot missile. If marks or beads were present on the inside rim of the wheel, points were distributed by color or size of bead. Stakes were wagered.

In fixed target contests, the targets most often were wooden stakes placed from twenty to fifty yards distant. The one who first succeeded in hitting the target, while the corresponding cast or shot of the opponent failed, won the wagers.

Contests for distance were won by the longest cast or shot. Again, wagers were staked.

TABLE III

NUMBERS OF NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES PLAYING WHEEL, TARGET, AND DISTANCE MISSILE GAMES IN THE EARLY 20th CENTURY FROM CURTIS' THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

Culture Area	Rolling Wheel Target	Fixed Target	Distance Target
Great Plains Tribes	9	3	4
Exclusivity	8	2	4
Southwest Tribes	1	1	0
Exclusivity	1	1	
California Tribes	1	7	4
Exclusivity	1	7	4
Great Basin Tribes	1	0	0
Exclusivity	1		
Plateau Tribes	3	2	0
Exclusivity	2	2	
Northwest Coast Tribes	4	4	0
Exclusivity	3	4	
Subarctic Tribes	1	2	1
Exclusivity	1	1	1
Arctic Tribes	0	1	0
Exclusivity		1	
Total Tribes	20	20	9

Of the scores of currently-told myths Curtis included in his twenty volume work, twelve contained references to arrow, javelin, and dart games. Table IV presents the game type and myth function for these twelve myths. All but one reference came from the oral tradition of tribes from the Great Plains culture area: Arikara, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Gros Ventre, Mandan, Oto, and Sarsi. The single tribe outside the Great Plains culture area to possess a myth which referred to an arrow, javelin, or dart game was the Klamath from the Plateau culture area.

The game of the wheel was mentioned most often in the data--in ten of the twelve myths. Single references were made to target archery and target javelins.

A number of myths recorded by Curtis seemed to indicate that arrow and javelin games had been in the culture since early times. Two of the myths in the data were creation or genesis myths which told not only of the origin of the people or of particular tribes but also of the origin of games. The Klamath "Creation Myth"[2] saw the emergence of Old Man Ancient as the elder brother to Gopher in their creation dual for supremacy. When he saw smoke, Gopher knew that he was beaten for he realized that the smoke was from the fires of people whom Old Man Ancient had created. Earlier in their dual both Gopher and Old Man Ancient had created amusements for their children and had planned the game of throwing javelins at a mark.

TABLE IV

MYTHS IN CURTIS' THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

REFERRING TO ARROW, JAVELIN, AND DART GAMES

Tribe	Myth	Game	Function of Myth
Arikara	Genesis Myth	Wheel & Pole	Origin & Migration of Arikara
Blackfoot	Origin of the Horns	Wheel & Arrow	Origin of Buffalo Dance
Cheyenne	Story of the Waterfall	Wheel & Pole	Origin of Buffalo for Food & Planting of Seeds
Cheyenne	Buffalo Dance Legend	Wheel & Pole	Origin of Buffalo to Hunt
Cheyenne	Ridge Hill Band	Wheel & Pole	Origin of Buffalo to Hunt & Planting of Corn
Cheyenne	Mad Bull Story	Wheel & Pole	Origin of Buffalo for Food
Gros Ventre	Gray Hawk Plume	Wheel Game	Rescue of People from Evil
Gros Ventre	Blood Clot	Wheel Game	Rescue of People from Evil
Klamath	The Creation	Target Javelin	Origin of Man
Mandan	Winning of the Buffalo	Wheel & Pole	Origin of Buffalo for Food
Oto	Death of Ishthinke	Target Archery	Destruction of Evil
Sarsi	The Girl Who Married a Star	Wheel Game	Return to Earth of Star's Wife

The "Genesis Myth"[3] of the Arikara noted the protection of the chosen people from destruction by a great flood by the Creator, Chief, and the migration of the saved to the West led by Mother. The saved prepared the sticks and the round stone for the wheel and pole game after receiving the thought from Chief.

While two of the myths in the data were genesis myths, six had to do with the buffalo; its origin, its perpetuation, and its presentation to the people. Theses myths harked back to an earlier day when the buffalo were believed to have been a race of savage, horned human beings, the predecessors and hunters of man. In the Mandan "Winning of the Buffalo,"[4] Looking Down's wife, Buffalo Woman, made a skop, the wheel used in the wheel and pole game, to amuse her son, Calf Boy. Looking Down had to contend several times with his mother-in-law, Old Buffalo Woman, and finally when they had staked their people against each other, Looking Down beat Old Buffalo Woman in a race around the world thus winning the buffalo for the people.

Three Cheyenne myths were strangely similar to one another: "Story of the Waterfall,"[5] "Buffalo Dance Legend,"[6] and the "Ridge Hill Band."[7] All took place in the earliest times when the people lived in the north and the east and were very poor. In each myth the people were playing the wheel and pole game and throngs of others were pressing about to watch the players hurl their shafts after the rolling wheel. Two warrior spirits decided to seek the aid of the old woman who lived under the waterfall or

grandmother, Big Spring on the Mountain, to help the starving people. In the "Story of the Waterfall," she gave them dried buffalo meat, corn, beans, and seeds. This was the beginning of the use of buffalo for food, and the planting of seeds in the earth. In "Buffalo-Dance Legend," Grandmother gave the warriors the buffalo for the people to hunt. And in the myth, "Ridge Hill Band," the warriors received buffalo and corn and instructions for planting whereupon the people moved from place to place until they crossed the Big Missouri and reached the Black Hills.

Another Cheyenne myth, "Mad Bull Story,"[8] explained the change from olden times when the buffalo ate humans to the day when people could eat all game and the buffalo could no longer eat people. This gift had been won by Youngest Brother who won a number of contests with Mad Bull including a wheel game contest. Following the contest, Brother and Sister taught the people to live in the Prairie; the people had lived in caves up to this time.

Like the Cheyenne myth, "Buffalo Dance Legend," the Blackfoot also had a myth explaining the "Origin of the Horns,"[9] a society founded to perpetuate the dance of the buffalo calves. In this myth, the young man, Gambler, founded the society after his father had located his remains by following the rolling wheel used in the wheel and arrow game, and brought him back to life by wrapping his bones in a medicine buffalo robe.

A number of the Plains myths containing references to missile games told of the conquering of evil and the obtaining of medicine

for good fortune. They were the Oto myth, "Death of Ishthinke"[10] and the Gros Ventre myths, "Gray Hawk Plume"[11] and "Blood Clot."[12] Blood Clot contested against the evil Buffalo Bull chief in the wheel game and won at every cast of the wheel and eventually killed the evil-doer.

Conclusion

In summary, the field research of the photo-artist, Edward S. Curtis, revealed that early in the twentieth century, traditional native American games utilizing arrows, javelins, and darts continued to be positive culture traits of a number of native North Americans living west of the Missouri River. At the same time, few references to these games were present in the oral tradition of the twentieth century native American but it would appear that the wheel game had been a positive culture trait of the Plains Indian from early times.

NOTES

1. Edward S. Curtis, The North American Indian (20 vols., 1907-1930, reprint New York, 1970), I, xii.
2. Ibid., XIII, 210.
3. Ibid., V, 80-86.
4. Ibid., 50-55.
5. Ibid., VI, 110.
6. Ibid., XIX, 131-33.
7. Ibid., 135-37.
8. Ibid., 145-48.
9. Ibid., XVIII, 192-93.
10. Ibid., XIX, 175-76.
11. Ibid., V, 123-27.
12. Ibid., 130-34.